

THE LITTLE BOOK ON

Life

IN THE

Spirit

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with Harry C. Griffith

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The Little Book on Life in the Spirit

Introduction

There is a story about a new convert to Christianity who was confused. After hearing a sermon on “Go and Make Disciples of All Nations” (Matthew 28:19), he asked the pastor what was being done to accomplish the task. “We help support a missionary in Africa,” was the reply. The next sermon was “Heal the Sick” (Matthew 10:8), and the convert again wanted to know what the church was doing. “Well,” the pastor replied, somewhat indignantly, “we visit our people when they are in the hospital.” The following Sunday the pastor preached on “We Are Ambassadors of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). “How are we being ambassadors of Christ?” the convert asked. The pastor thought for a minute and then said, “We encourage our people to be socially involved in the communities where they live.” The man walked away shaking his head and muttering to himself, “There must be something more to Christianity than this!”

This little book is a modest attempt at dealing with that “something more.”

I became a part of the renewal movement of the Church back in the 60s. I was sure that the Church didn’t look right. There was a lot of dryness and formality. People didn’t talk about their faith; it just wasn’t done in polite society. Where, O where was the face of Jesus? At that point, things started to happen in the lives of a lot of

Christians, and the renewal movement began. There was great enthusiasm as people began to talk freely about the difference Jesus Christ made in their lives. People began to experience what seemed to be miraculous healings, and churches started not only having healing services, but also expecting people who were prayed for to be healed. The study of Scripture became a joy, and Christians equipped themselves to truly be ambassadors of Christ, in all aspects of their lives, leading others to conversion and renewal of life and doing the work of Christ in the world around them.

The renewal movement was Spirit-driven to restore the Church, and to make her alive in Christ. A generation has now gone by and we have discovered that spiritual renewal has to be a constantly continuing movement. What had been an empowering glow of the Holy Spirit seems to have dimmed. What blots on the face of Christ this age has brought! He will not abandon his Church but he expects us to cleanse and renew his body with his empowerment. He wants us to know and live into his constant presence through his Holy Spirit.

Somehow, many have missed the “something more” God has in mind for us. In the year 1441 Thomas À Kempis completed the compilation of a little devotional book entitled *The Imitation of Christ*. It became second only to the Bible in popularity among printed works. It would be presumptuous in the extreme to in any way devalue this little classic. It has aided literally millions of people in living lives according to God’s will. For Christians, Jesus is certainly the example of how we are to live. However, the eminent English Bible scholar John Stott has said, “This is the secret of Christian sanctity. It is

not that we should strive to live like Jesus, but that he by his Spirit should come and live in us.” Stott’s statement does not contradict the idea of imitating Christ, but it does seem to get it in proper perspective.

The key words in Stott’s quote are “strive” and “Spirit.” *Striving* to be like Jesus is not so different from what the Pharisees were attempting—and always failed—to do in living by the commands of the Old Testament. The Pharisees had worked out an elaborate set of rules and regulations to live by. These rules and regulations weren’t bad in themselves; it was the rigidity with which they were applied and the false notion that keeping them would assure God’s favor that drew Jesus’ rebuke. We do the same thing as Christians if we focus on “do’s” and “don’ts” as a means of earning eternal fellowship with Christ. We can’t work our way into salvation; it comes by the grace of God. It comes through the Holy Spirit working within us.

In the meantime, the Holy Spirit seems to remain the “Missing Person” of the Trinity. Through 2,000 years of history the Christian Church still seems to be somewhat puzzled about the Holy Spirit and how he works in our lives. Thus, this little devotional book seeks to take a practical look at how we can live in the Spirit and thereby become more effective in imitating the life Christ has for us.

How the Holy Spirit Works

How seriously have you thought about who the Holy Spirit is in your life? For some Christians, the Holy Spirit is sort of a vague notion, a good idea but of little practical application. Someone once said, quite honestly, that his perception of the Holy Spirit was “an oblong blur”! Others place their focus on Scripture. Because we know that the Bible was inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16), many Christians believe that the Bible itself is the outworking of the Holy Spirit. In other words, if you want to experience the inner guidance of the Spirit, see what the Bible has to say about the matter. While it is true that the Holy Spirit can guide you through Scripture and that no prompting of the Holy Spirit will be in conflict with Scripture, the Bible was never meant to replace the inner working of the Holy Spirit.

For those who have mistaken notions about the Holy Spirit, or simply lack of knowledge of him, this book is intended to bring the Holy Spirit into clear focus. You will draw closer to God by understanding how the Holy Spirit works in your life. You will sense freedom in Christ as you have never experienced it before. You will find confidence in God and empowerment in doing his will in the world that you have never had before. Your life will be fuller and spiritually richer than you have even imagined.

To start with, here are some ways in which the Holy Spirit works:

The Holy Spirit empowers us to do what we cannot do in and of ourselves. In John 13:34, Jesus said, “A new

command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” It is, of course, possible to love one another. What is not possible for us, from a human point of view, is to love one another as Christ loves us. That is only possible by the empowering of the Holy Spirit; in other words, by the love of Christ operating in us. If the Holy Spirit can empower us to love as Christ loves—and certainly that is his expectation of us—there is no limit to what we can do through the Holy Spirit within us. Some might say, “It’s not natural to love people who are so unlovable.” It’s not natural; it’s supernatural! The late Bishop Festo Kivengere of Uganda wrote a book about the persecutor of Christians in his country and entitled it *I Love Idi Amin*. Bishop Kivengere explained, “I have to love him because Jesus loves him.”

The Holy Spirit performs what we refer to as miracles. Jesus clearly performed miracles of great variety while he was on earth, and he said that his followers would do even greater things (John 14:12). This is not an indication that there would be individual Christians through whom even greater miracles were wrought but that his people, in combination, would be instruments of these miracles down through the centuries. These miracles occur as a result of prayer. It is not that our prayers cause God to do something he would not otherwise do; it is that when we pray in accordance with his will, we release to God what he has entrusted to us, and things happen. Actually, we see wondrous acts as “miracles” from *our* side. From *God’s* side they are not miracles but mercies, because God is not surprised at what he can do.

The Holy Spirit speaks to our inner self. As we pray about concerns we have, inner thoughts come to us that provide solutions, guidance, peace and other forms of help. If we live in a state of total reliance on God—what might be called providential disposition—those nudgings from God will come to us in answer to our needs even when we are not specifically in prayer. When Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is within you,” we were given the assurance that the King lives within us. By the Holy Spirit he gives us holy thoughts that are beyond the measure of our minds.

The Holy Spirit leads us to, or reminds us of, Scripture. As we face choices in life, our primary source of guidance is the Bible. If we are serious about our commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives, we will want to know what Scripture says about the matter before us. As we grow in our knowledge and understanding of the Bible, that guidance may often come by our remembering a teaching or a story that speaks to our situation. Otherwise, we may need to use a concordance or other Bible aid to see what Scripture says about the matter. A young man came to a prayer group having no biblical orientation. As the group began studying the Bible together he spoke out in amazement, “Why, they are talking about me.” The Holy Spirit opens up the Bible to everyone who hungers for God.

The Holy Spirit leads us to, or sends to us, people to meet our needs or to test us. The Holy Spirit can speak to us through other people, including those who are not Christians. In some instances, faced with a weighty matter, we may go to a Christian friend whom we consider more mature in the faith and ask for guidance. The Holy Spirit

can speak through that friend to our benefit. If we are prayerful concerning our need, sometimes someone least likely to be a source of godly wisdom will be used by God to say or do something that answers our prayer. The caution here, however, is never to accept guidance that is contrary to Scripture. Also, more often than perhaps we would like for it to be so, God sends people to test us. Discomforting though it may be, it is part of God's plan that we grow through testing. We have to remind ourselves that Christianity is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We aren't meant to "go it alone." Paul's teaching on the Body of Christ (see Romans 12:3-8) shows us that in the fellowship there are people who have gifts differing from ours, and the joy of that is that they have those gifts for us.

In these various ways, the Holy Spirit works within us. He is there for us, just as Jesus promised when he said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13); "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Acts 1:8); and "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever" (John 14:16). Jesus knew what life would be like for his followers when he was no longer physically present on the earth. The indwelling Holy Spirit was God's practical solution to how the Gospel would spread and the world be brought to Christ.

But, for this inner working of the Spirit to be a reality in your life, you have to receive him and acknowledge his presence by living into the promises of Jesus in faith and trust.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

Despite the incidents in Acts 8:14-17 (in which the Samaritans had been baptized but had not received the Holy Spirit) and 10:44-48 (wherein the Holy Spirit fell on Gentiles before they had been baptized), it is generally agreed that the Holy Spirit is received by the individual Christian at baptism. Thus, according to Scripture (John 14:15-17), the Holy Spirit dwells within those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Why, then, are we not seeing more evidence of John 14:12 (greater things being done by followers of Jesus) in the lives of Christians?

The answer may be that the Holy Spirit has been relegated to the position of no more than an intellectual idea in the minds of many Christians. We accept on faith that the Holy Spirit dwells within us because Jesus promised it, but we don't expect anything to happen within us as a result. The Holy Spirit remains a concept rather than the *modus operandi* of our lives. The Holy Spirit is like a precious gift we have received but have failed to open.

For us to be the people God calls us to be, the Holy Spirit must move from a concept in our mind to a reality in our heart. Until this has happened, we are holding hostage the means God designed for us to be his people in the world today. We have received the Holy Spirit; now we must release him to work in our lives. This is the only way we can live in the Spirit.

The way to proceed is the way of prayer. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will become, in us, all that he is

intended to be. Let us return to the metaphor of the Holy Spirit as a beautiful gift that has been presented to us but that we have set aside in a corner. We admire its ribbons and wrappings and sometimes we wonder what is inside. We are too busy to open it up right now, and we are waiting for some special occasion to get into it. It's that old story of people who are so occupied with business, daily demands, and recreation but who insist that "when things calm down" and there is more time they will begin paying attention to their spiritual lives. In doing so, they are postponing the most wonderful discovery in their lives...one that may never happen if they keep putting it off.

Now is the time to release that glorious gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift that never ends. If one's heart is open, this simple prayer is all that needs to be said:

"O Holy Spirit, fill me with your Presence and your Power, I pray. Remove from me all resistance to your gracious desire to occupy my mind and my spirit. Let me be an open vessel to receive you wholeheartedly into my life that I may be a witness for my Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."

How We Learn to Live by the Holy Spirit

Are you ready to release the glorious present the Lord has for you in the person of the Holy Spirit? A prayer of invitation for the Holy Spirit to fill your life is only the first step. The next steps involve learning how to live by the Spirit on a day-to-day basis.

You will gain confidence and trust in the guidance the Holy Spirit wants to provide as you put into practice the suggestions that follow. These steps are not cumbersome or difficult; in fact, they are their own source of joy. Even if you are already doing these things, there will be a new sense of discovery and adventure as you look to see the ways in which the Holy Spirit works within you in each of these areas of spiritual life and growth.

Once you release the Holy Spirit to work in your life, there are a number of ways in which you will learn to live by the Spirit:

You learn to live by the Holy Spirit by growing in knowledge and understanding of Scripture, especially the New Testament. By having a plan for daily Bible reading with a helpful commentary, you can accomplish much over the years. Being a part of a Bible study group is also helpful. Over a period of time, when you face decisions, a particular Bible verse will come to your mind that speaks to the issue. Sometimes, instead, you will remember a story in the Bible showing you how God dealt with a similar situation and will be guided accordingly. After years of sincere study, as you face choices in life, you will tend to “know” what God’s will would be because Scripture has

become an integral part of your life. Paul calls this being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). Meditation on the verses of the Bible is more than an intellectual exercise; it is seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit, trusting that God has a special word for your life today.

You learn to live by the Holy Spirit by being a part of a body of believers in which the Holy Spirit is evident. Christians grow in their faith by being with others who are faithful. We give affirmation and encouragement to one another. Likewise, as we seek to grow in life in the Spirit, it is important to be around others in whom the Holy Spirit is active. You have a choice. You don’t have to be a member of a congregation in which God’s Holy Spirit is not understood and honored. If you are in a spiritually dead congregation, you can pray to the Lord about it. Perhaps he will send you to a different congregation or he may show you how you can become an instrument of spiritual renewal in your church.

You learn to live by the Holy Spirit by worshipping regularly. Growing in life in the Spirit certainly involves praising God in worship each week. God loves us beyond understanding, and he expects us to return that love. One of the primary ways you can do that is in worship. Regular worship helps you remember how dependent you are on God, and that makes you more open to his working through his Holy Spirit in every aspect of your life. Worship is more than attending a religious program; it can actually be the gateway to heaven where you experience the holy presence of God and the Holy Spirit is a palpable reality.

You learn to live by the Holy Spirit by being in fellowship with other Christians regularly in addition to weekly worship. In an age in which there are so many distractions, so much to *do*, people need to find ways to prioritize their time. One priority should be Christian fellowship. For you, it could be a Bible study group such as mentioned above, a prayer group, or any number of other ways in which you can minister and be ministered to by ones who are on spiritual journeys parallel to your own. This is another way in which Spirit-led Christians can build one another up and better see mutual reliance on the Holy Spirit in the everyday aspects of their lives. The original prayer group was Christ and his disciples. Jesus could have had scores of people around him every day, but he chose to have a small group in which everyone could gather in intimacy with him.

You learn to live by the Holy Spirit by having a disciplined life of prayer. To grow in the Spirit, you must be in relationship with God, and the best line of communication in that relationship is prayer. This means being regular in prayer, perhaps a “quiet time” each day to be alone with God in prayer. It could include being in a prayer group or on a prayer chain (in which prayer needs are passed around to members of the chain for their individual prayers). Mainly it means giving priority to prayer so that you go to God with your concerns as a first resort rather than a last one. Prayer is the breath of the spiritual life. We know what happens when we stop breathing. William Law, one of the classic teachers on prayer, said that the Spirit of prayer is the Holy Spirit. We don’t just pray *to* Christ; we pray *with* Christ through his indwelling presence.

You learn to live by the Holy Spirit by serving others on Christ's behalf. Jesus said that the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45) and in many ways taught his disciples the importance of servanthood. As James (2:14-26) has pointed out, it does little good to talk about our faith if we are not showing it in what we do on behalf of those in need. Life in the Spirit means allowing God's love to flow through you to others. As you experience that happening in your life, it bolsters your confidence in the Holy Spirit's ability to work through you. Through the Holy Spirit your service becomes inspired and empowered. Mother Teresa of Calcutta countered those who commended her for doing what they called social work but saying, "It's not social work. We are contemplatives and we pray for and with Jesus."

Learning to live by the Holy Spirit involves being disciplined and disciplining others. To experience life in the Spirit you need to have the humility to know that you can benefit from the counsel and guidance of others who are more advanced in their life in the Spirit than you are, and to seek that counsel and guidance. This is a process that is referred to as being disciplined so that you may more truly become, day-by-day, disciples of Jesus. Likewise, you should be willing to help others who are newer in the faith than you are. God will not only use you to reach others for Christ, but expects you to be willing to give of your time and attention to them that they may grow.

Learning to live by the Holy Spirit manifests itself in giving generously to Kingdom work. Nothing will test you more effectively concerning whether you are ready and willing to live in the Spirit than what you do with your

possessions. If you truly want to be God's person in the world today, led by his Holy Spirit, you will recognize that all you have belongs to him. That makes it much easier to decide to tithe and to otherwise give of your resources for the Lord's work and for the needs of others. God comes first in all things, including your spending. You will soon discover that you cannot out-give God. The more you give, the more you will seem to have. There are three kinds of giving: grudge-giving, duty-giving and thanks-giving; only the third blesses God.

Learning to live by the Holy Spirit includes finding and using your spiritual gifts. God has graced you with spiritual gifts to do his work in the world. At three specific points in Scripture Paul lists some of these spiritual gifts (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). If you want to live in the Spirit, you will be putting those gifts into practice. This is a unique way to see the Holy Spirit at work as he works through you to do things you never imagined you could do. There are ways to discover what your gifts are and to get the help you need in learning to use them to God's glory.

Learning to live by the Holy Spirit means being a good parent, child or friend. Applying the principles above within your family or extended family is not only the best way to live in the Spirit but should be your priority in doing so. Paul tells us about some of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, and then he ends but saying "I will show you a more excellent way." That leads into 1 Corinthians 13, his great hymn of love. It is the love of Christ that comes through the Holy Spirit that is your greatest gift. The supreme test of your spirituality is this: do those closest to

you experience the love of Jesus through your life among them?

Learning to live by the Holy Spirit can be aided by exploring various aspects of living in the Spirit. You will now encounter in this book a series of devotional meditations that deal with many facets of life in the Spirit. Each is designed to give you an increasingly clearer picture of how life in the Holy Spirit is experienced in situations you will face. Using biblical references and real life examples, they will help you grow in your knowledge and love of Christ through his indwelling presence. They are, in a sense, your stair steps to a new life in Christ through the Holy Spirit within you.

Day One

Waiting for His Promises

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Acts 1:4b-5

Some years ago there was a church in Houston, Texas that was located in a deteriorating part of the city, with a deteriorating facility and a declining congregation. It was what some would say seemed to be a hopeless situation. But there was within that congregation a small prayer group of older women who regularly and diligently prayed for the Holy Spirit to come upon that church and change it. He did. Miracles happened, and that congregation became internationally known for the manifestations of the Holy Spirit that happened within and through it.

After Jesus’ departure into heaven (Acts 1:1-5), his followers gathered together in an upper room in Jerusalem to devote themselves to prayer (vv. 13-14). Present were the apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. They were with one accord, one in mind and spirit, as they awaited Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit.

This little prayer group became the channel through which the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers when, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon them (Acts 2:1-4).

We find today that patient waiting in prayer is underrated. We want to give fixed deadlines to God. If God doesn't answer in time, we take matters into our own hands. But God's timing is always perfect.

Fortunately, that little band of believers in that upper room were willing to wait on God. Pentecost was the Jewish celebration of the giving of the law. God's plan would now be fulfilled, not by legalism, but by his people being filled with the Holy Spirit. And that occurred through those who waited in prayer.

Jesus had charged them to "wait for the promise." The same Jesus charges us to study the word for the promises of God and to pray patiently to him who is trustworthy. Just as the apostles didn't anticipate the wind, the fire, and the ability to speak in other tongues, you don't know exactly how God's promises will be manifested to you, but you can be sure they will be more wonderful than you could ever imagine.

Prayer: *"Come, Holy Spirit, come! Come as fire and burn, come as the wind and cleanse, come as the light and reveal."*

Day 2

The Spirit, Breath, and Creation

“And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” John 20: 22

The Holy Spirit creates new lives. Gert Behanna was a good example of what the Holy Spirit can do. Before she became a Christian she had almost ended her life with drugs and alcohol. She tried to destroy herself by an overdose of sleeping pills. She survived and knelt at her bedside for her first attempt at prayer. She prayed, “God, I don’t know who you are, but if you can help this old lady please do.” The Holy Spirit came into her life and she knew Jesus Christ. From that moment she became a new creation. The old Gert was gone forever and the new Gert served the Lord in a stirring way as speaker, evangelist, and counselor over the remainder of her life, enlightening and encouraging many for Jesus.

Creation is a spiritual act, not just a physical act. As we learn from Genesis 1:1-3, “The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.” As creation began, the Holy Spirit was on the move. How fitting that the Holy Spirit, who always represents illumination, should at the first create light. “Let there be light, and there was light.”

Yes, the Father and the Son were there with the Spirit. He is the Father of light and the Son is the Light of the World. At Pentecost there was the beginning of the new creation and the light of God was as fire. All things were changed, put in a new light.

With the light there was the breath of God (Genesis 2:4-9). When man was created, God breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living being. At Pentecost the rushing mighty wind was God's breath (*pneuma hagion*) bringing in the next creation of humanity, the new birth.

Jesus anticipated Pentecost (John 20:22) when he breathed on the disciples, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The disciples were changed into apostles; they were sent out to preach the Gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, Jesus will empower you by the Holy Spirit to go out and share with the world around you the truth of God's love, and you can do that in many ways. It is as you let the light of Christ shine through all you do all day long that others will be drawn to him. When your heart is filled with the love of God and the Holy Spirit inspires you to share that love, you will be amazed at the opportunities you have tell others about Jesus, in word and deed.

Prayer: *Breathe on me, breath of God. Fill me with life anew until I will what you would will and do what you would do.*

Day 3

The Fire of the Holy Spirit

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” Acts 2:1

In Acts 2:1-13, we are told of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, “And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.” The shape of a tongue is like that of a flame. The tongues of the apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak the good news to people of many different languages. Thereby Jesus was proclaimed as the Savior of the world, to all people in all places.

Just as the fire of the Spirit brings light to every dark corner of the world, so he penetrates every dark corner of our souls. The symbol of fire speaks powerfully to us.

- 1) The fire warms all. There are so many parts of us that need warming. How devastating it is to be cold to people; they can feel the chill and their life is diminished. How we fail God when we are luke-warm in our faith and fail to exhibit a Christ of joy and deep love to others. But the Holy Spirit transforms us into radiating people of warmth.
- 2) The fire spreads in all directions. No part of us is unaffected. People have referred to the spread of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit as sparks among the stubble. The world was in a spiritual drought, just waiting for the fire to leap in all

directions. So it is with our personal lives. The fire of the Spirit spreads to our sight so that we see things differently through the eyes of God. It spreads to our hearing so that we hear God speaking. It spreads to our movements so that we act as Christ would act.

- 3) The fire refines us. “For he is like a refiner’s fire” (Malachi 3:2). It is not enough for us to become warm people, though God wants us to be just that. Nor is it enough for us to be affected in every part of us by the Spirit though, again, God wants this to happen to us. But beyond that he wants to turn our dross into gold. We are to be totally transformed, to be remade in his image. This does not come without pain and suffering. Every day I pray to the Holy Spirit, “Come as a fire and burn.” Then I visualize the Spirit burning away all those sinful encumbrances or my life. There are “growing pains” as we mature in the Spirit.

As you live by the Holy Spirit, you will sense the warming of your heart, the warming of your love for those around you, and, as well, the burning conviction of sin when you go astray. All of these manifestations of the Holy Spirit in your life will be helpful to you, no one more than the other. They work together to mold you into the person God intends you to be that you may be his ambassador in your world.

Prayer: *Welcome, Flame of God’s Spirit, do your work in me.*

Day 4

The Age of the Spirit: Beginning, Middle, Ending

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit.” Matthew 4:1

The young missionary Jim Elliot exemplified what it means to be a living current in God’s unstoppable stream, led by the Holy Spirit. He is remembered for his statement, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” He was killed at 29 years of age when he and his companions sought to evangelize the Auca Indians in Ecuador, but his wife and others later went to live among the Aucas and led them to Christ.

In Matthew 3:16 we are told, “He saw the Spirit of God descending upon him like a dove.” Christ’s baptism was the beginning of the Age of the Holy Spirit. Like a dove, the Spirit descended upon the head of the Church. We may date the life of the Church to that astounding celestial event. Christ was now anointed by the Holy Spirit to usher in the ministry that would proclaim the Kingdom of God, choose the apostles, and launch his way to Calvary. Just as he was baptized for our sins, not his (see Matthew 3:11-17), so he died on the cross for our sins, not his. Significantly, Jesus’ first act was to go out into the wilderness to fast and pray (Matthew 4:1). How clearly he teaches us that when God presents to us a commission we are not to dash out without divine empowerment. We are to be silent before him and then to go where he leads.

Then the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the middle of the Age of the Holy Spirit.

Here, as John the Baptist promised before Jesus' baptism, was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now the apostles truly became the Body of Christ. They would now do extraordinary things that they could not do before. How was it possible that a group of uncultured fishermen and such would overturn the world in the name of Christ? It was only possible because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had a boldness that was inexplicable in worldly terms. This was because of their certainty that they did not go forth alone. Through the Spirit, Jesus was with them always.

The final, ultimate, ending Age of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of the Holy Spirit of each individual Christian beginning from the apostolic age to the time of the Second Coming of Christ. The last stage of God's saving work is to bring each one of us home. We are privileged to live in the final act of the divine drama of redemption. In us the Holy Spirit is not an academic study of Christian history, but the living current of God's unstoppable stream.

It is not likely that you will be asked to make the sacrifice Jim Elliot and his friends did, but you can nonetheless be a living current in God's unstoppable stream. God has just as unique a plan for your life as he had for Elliot's because you too live in the final stage of God's saving work in the world.

Prayer: Lord, may your Spirit fly into my life afresh each day as the heavenly dove.

Day 5

Temples of the Holy Spirit

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” 1 Corinthians 6:19

A friend had, up until that time, been rather a nominal Christian when she discovered that she was intended to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. “On that life-changing day,” she wrote, “I experienced the living water spoken of throughout the Bible. I experienced the Holy Spirit as a powerful, sweet, wonderful presence within me that filled me to overflowing. My eyes were opened with greater understanding of the Scriptures, and I started living rather than existing. For the first time in my life I experienced myself as a temple of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price. As Paul points out (1 Corinthians 6:20), I now want to honor God with my body, and also with my heart, mind and soul. The Holy Spirit is not some nice concept, an energy, or a force. The Holy Spirit is the new person that comes to live within us, the Spirit of Jesus himself. We must want this more than anything in life. And when we do, he comes, and nothing is ever the same again.”

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Paul is dealing with the question of sexual morality. The Corinthians had been justifying promiscuity and prostitution on the grounds that “all things are lawful” for followers of Christ. Paul corrects them by pointing out that all things are not helpful. Jesus set us free from sin that we might no longer be controlled

by it. That didn't mean that we should revert to being controlled by our lusts and desires.

Christianity places high value on the body because our physical existence is to be in service of the Lord. Christians believe in the resurrection of the body. We will live in renewed bodies in the presence of the Lord forever. For now, because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, our mortal bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, holy places in which God abides.

How, then, can a Christian justify joining this body, consecrated to Christ and filled with his Spirit, to a prostitute? Paul reminds the Corinthians, "The two will become one flesh." Our bodies are already joined to the Lord, being in one spirit with him. How could we then join that body in immoral relations with others? We do not have the right to give ourselves over to sinful practices. We are to glorify God in our bodies because they are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Just as our friend in the illustration above, you will think of your body in a wholly new way when you fully comprehend what it means for it to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. Although this will undoubtedly limit your activities to things you know are godly and steer you away from the ungodly, your conscience will be clear and you will experience an increasing sense of joy.

Prayer: Help me, Lord, not to defile what you have placed within me by your grace.

Day 6

The Spirit and Faith

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing with faith?” Galatians 3:2b RSV

I have a friend who, when asked about her faith in Jesus Christ, always says, “I’m a good person.” She is definitely a good person, and does many good works; but she has never understood the message that simply doing good works is not what the Christian life is all about. It is about faith in Jesus Christ that, incidentally, leads to good works. I sometimes despair of the number of Christians who think they are earning their way into heaven by their good works.

In Galatians 3:2-14, Paul is speaking of justification by faith through grace. We are acceptable because Jesus Christ is in us by the Holy Spirit. We are accounted as if we were already perfected, though we aren’t as yet.

In writing to the Galatians, Paul is pointing out that the Jews sought salvation by attempting to live by the letter of the law. The Galatians, on the other hand, should know better. Salvation does not come that way. Faith is the initial act by which a person becomes a Christian, and salvation comes from faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is not intellectual assent to certain ideas but trust in a living, loving God.

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing with faith?” By faith we receive Jesus

as Lord; it is the surrender of our lives to him for pardon, peace, and kingship. Justifying faith is itself the gift of God; for no one can say, “Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). The gift of faith also leads the way to further gifts.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, all gifts are already potentially within you. All you have to do is “stir up the gift that is within you” (2 Timothy 1:16).

Faith, then, in those who have received the Holy Spirit, enters upon a new function—that of realizing and appropriating the truth and grace which already has been won for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian writer Keith Miller refers to us in one of his books as “the comers.” That is, through the Holy Spirit, we are stirred up to become more and more Christ-like. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20)—all of him in all of me.

Trying to earn your way to salvation by good works is just like striving to live by the law instead of being guided by the Holy Spirit. Instead, relax into the Spirit, confident in God to lead you on the path he has chosen for you.

Prayer: Lord, give me faith to have more faith that I may trust you more and more.

Day 7

How to Recognize the Spirit

“By this you know the Spirit of God; every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.” 1 John 4:2 RSV

I’m reminded of a layman who, in his mid-60s, attended a renewal event in his church because he wanted to be sure “it didn’t get out of hand.” He was brought into a new awareness of the Holy Spirit as a result of the event and became a vital instrument of God’s love for the remaining twenty years of his life. He led many people into a relationship with the Lord simply by showing them love.

The Holy Spirit came according to Christ’s promise to teach us, to guide us into all truth, and to speak with authority. This is why the apostles overwhelmed all other teaching as they spoke in the name of Christ. This they did because they had Christ dwelling within them by the Holy Spirit.

You cannot teach God’s truth if you are not led by the Spirit; if you are led by the Spirit, you cannot help but teach God’s truth because it is God who is speaking through you. The first sign of real conversion is the confession of your sinful state because you realize how false you are without the Holy Spirit.

When the Good Spirit comes in, the bad spirits must go out. The Holy Spirit cannot be at home with a false and

impure spirit. “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Worldly people pay attention to the word of worldly teachers and this is like the blind leading the blind. Those who are filled by the Holy Spirit not only reach the hearts of spiritual people, but also penetrate the hearts of worldly people.

The penetrating principle is love, a love such as worldly people have never met before. Not only will they see, through you, how Christians love one another but also how you love those who perhaps never knew they were lovable. Above all, in you they will see God: “God is Love.”

Prayer: May the grace, love, and truth of the Holy Spirit be with me this day and always.

Day 8

Flesh and Spirit

“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” John 3:3

The story of John Newton is certainly one that makes clear Jesus’ meaning when he speaks of being born again. Physically born in London in 1725, Newton went to sea with the British Navy and was later in command of one of the infamous slave trading ships. His spiritual birth to Christianity moved him, after a time as a maritime clerk, to seek the ordained ministry. His hymns, such as “Amazing Grace,” and his ministry brought many to Christ. His epitaph reads: “John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” This verse comes from Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15). The great work of the Holy Spirit is new birth and new life. We are now assured and aware that God is our true parent. Then we begin to take on the features of our parent. Through spiritual birth we are enabled to show this high parentage, to begin to resemble our Father.

If we live only by the fleshly birth, we not only become obsessed with serving our physical bodies but we also develop a fleshly mind. We get caught up in the ephemeral prizes of this present world. We think that the

“good life” is to eat, and drink, and find amusements, work to gain more money, and be praised by people.

But when we are born of the Spirit, we seek spiritual goals. We look upward, not downward. We recognize how unsatisfying the fleshly goals are, and that the people who are obsessed by them desire more and more of them because their deeper hunger has never been fulfilled.

Jesus said, “I have come to send fire on the earth” (Luke 12:49). This is the fire of the Holy Spirit that consumes the dry things of this world and makes us an eternal flame. A useful daily prayer is: “Come, Holy Spirit, come. Come as the fire and burn. Come as the wind and cleanse. Come as the light and reveal. Convict, convert, consecrate, till I am wholly yours.”

As you pray this, picture the fire of the Holy Spirit burning away the worldly encrustations that still cling to your mind, body, and spirit. Then picture the wind coming and blowing away the dark ashes until God’s temple is cleansed. Finally, let the light come in and shine in every part of your being, a light that goes forth from your soul to those around you.

Prayer: *O Holy Spirit, help me to show forth my true parentage.*

Day 9

The Holy Spirit and Remembrance

“I am going away and I am coming back to you.”

John 14:28

One who lived by prayer and understood and relied completely on the promises of God through the leading of the Holy Spirit was George Mueller. He felt called to a ministry of feeding, clothing and educating destitute orphans. He began in 1836 with a home for 30 orphaned girls. By 1870, he had 2,000 resident children; and, by the time of his death, he had cared for 8,000 children. He raised all of the funding needed for this vital work simply through prayer. He never asked anyone but God for help, yet it poured in, sometimes at the very last moment.

“The comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:25-31).

Because we are finite human beings, we cannot live without prayer. In prayer we make a significant remembrance—that wherever we are, God is also. Just the remembrance of God’s presence is continually recalled and remembered. If you keep your prayers, you cannot keep your sins.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is the promise of the presence of Christ. Not only is he present (even when we forget), but he actively reminds us of his presence. When

Christ is “here” it is never a passive thing but moving, motivating experiences, experiences that are Christ acting in and through us, extensions of himself.

We may act as confused worldly people at times and wonder, “What should I say, what should I do?” The world will not tell us the right thing to do. The world is a maze of conflicting opinions. But the Holy Spirit will tell us all that Jesus Christ has said to us. What a relief! No wonder that one of the names of the Holy Spirit is “counselor.”

Jesus goes on to say, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives did I give to you.” You will be blessed with a sense of peace as you go on your way with Jesus, who is your way upon earth and your way to heaven.

Being regularly in prayer, sensing God’s action in your life through the Holy Spirit within you, and experiencing the resulting peace, will build your confidence and trust in the Lord who said that, although he was going away, he would come again.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, come and remind me of the words and actions of Jesus Christ.

Day 10

Too Deep for Words

“The Spirit helps in our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.” Romans 8:26 RSV

Sometimes I have wondered if I have prayed “correctly.” Perhaps I have offended God by asking for the wrong thing in the wrong way. How encouraging, then, is this word from the apostle Paul to know that the only real failure in prayer is to stop praying. If we come before God in prayer he not only does not turn us away, but he receives our prayers. It’s as if we sent off arrows that are nowhere near the target, but God meets them in mid-air and directs them into the bulls-eye.

Why is the Holy Spirit sighing in Romans 8:26-30? Is it because we ask for too much in our prayers? No, it’s because we ask for too little. He wants to give us his kingdom.

The Holy Spirit, who intercedes for us when we don’t know how to pray, is like a dove flying where we cannot fly. As the Holy Spirit joins our prayers, he fills us with longings and desires that are far beyond the measure of our minds.

The earthly breath gets knocked out of us and we begin gasping for heavenly breath, heavenly gifts. The Holy Spirit sighs and urges us to pray for that which is too deep

for words, for spiritual delights. He is making the divine correction to our imperfect prayers.

As we keep on praying, we become thirsty for better waters than our stagnant pool of desire. “As a heart longs for flowing streams, so longs my heart for thee, O God” (Psalm 42:1).

The Holy Spirit is like a dove because the dove calls out in a wistful, plaintive, longing tone, sometimes far into the night, or very often early in the morning. When we are at our weakest, the Spirit intercedes for us gently and yet with all the power of God, for he is God.

Are you having problems in your prayer life? Do you sometimes think your prayers are “bouncing off the ceiling” rather than reaching the heart of God. Romans 8:26-30 should give you confidence in your prayers even when they seem their weakest. God knows you “inside out” and understands your spiritually dry times and your doubts. But he is well able to supply whatever is missing in your spiritual life through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, keep me praying with the encouragement that the Spirit will turn my prayers into your perfect will.

Day 11

Saved by His Outpouring Love

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” Romans 5:5 RSV

Martin Luther said, “I have twice as much to do today, therefore I must pray twice as long.”

We learn from Romans 5:1-11 that the Lord saves us because he loves us. We are reconciled through Jesus’ death (v.10) and we are saved by his life—Jesus Christ’s life that comes into us by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

We also learn that we are continuously recipients of Jesus’ life and love because the Holy Spirit is not a one-time gift but an outpouring that never ends. Once we receive and appropriate to our use the life and love within us by the Holy Spirit, our life begins to change forever. No longer are we facing the challenges of life on our own; we are conscious that Jesus is with us.

For some the thought of the Holy Spirit is so mysterious that he seems vague and untouchable. Yet the Holy Spirit is Christ’s most intimate moment-by-moment presence.

The Holy Spirit came to enable the apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, but along with the preaching came the sweeping, searing power of his saving presence. Otherwise we were helpless creatures (v.6), lost in our sin.

But now we have Christ with us all the time. “By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit he has given us” (1 John 3:24). This is why we have to persevere in prayer: to keep open the channel for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are not saved by doctrine but by Christ’s life.

Why do you begin to feel discouraged when you are living your life at a frenetic pace? It’s not that your salvation has been taken away from you; God does not take away what he has given. It is because you have pinched the flow of the Spirit by taking little or no time for prayer. If you don’t have the outpouring of God’s love through the Holy Spirit you suffer from spiritual anemia.

Stop and pray. The Holy Spirit is ever ready to comfort, guide, empower, inspire. You “have gained access by faith into this grace” in which you now stand.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, correct me when I begin to think of your presence as condemnation, and turn my thought to the outpouring of your love.

Day 12

Spirit Living Is Heavenly Living

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.” Romans 8:11 RSV

In the Holy Spirit, though we still live in this world, we are brought nearer to heaven than any of us can imagine or express.

Not many years ago my wife died. After fifty-five years of marriage it was an indescribable wrench to be separated from her. Until it happens to you personally, you can have no idea how deep your sorrow could be. I was humbled to realize that though I had ministered sympathetically to those who had lost a mate, I never had understood the depth of their grief. Now I did.

One day I was driving through Wisconsin and I was overwhelmed by sadness to the point of tears. I stopped for gas and then went out on the highway again. The sky ahead was perfectly clear but, suddenly, three strange clouds appeared directly in view of my windshield. As clear as crystal, three letters, a mile long, were formed. The letters were ILU. It was a stunning vision, and the Spirit instructed me to accept it as God’s grace and comfort.

Through the Holy Spirit we have heavenly blessings and privileges. He even allows us to know that all is well with the inhabitants of heaven. This is not to be confused

with “spiritualism” or occult communion with the dead. We simply are brought near heaven as we live in the Spirit. We are with Christ; they are with Christ. We are in the same company.

As the redeemed of the Lord, we are always walking around in a holy place; we are his temples. Even when we leave the worship setting of the church, we are still in the holy temple.

The Holy Spirit not only inspires, empowers and guides your life as you invite him to do so, he is also a great comfort in times of loss. Once the Holy Spirit is operative in your life, you will be able to deal with grief in a new way. Of course, the pain of separation from one you loved will still be there. But, in some supernatural way, there will be a deep peace within in the midst of the pain. And, as you seek it, you will receive practical help in dealing with your loss. As an example, when I was coping with a need for closure concerning the loss of loved ones, the Holy Spirit inspired me to write letters to them saying the things that were on my heart that I had not gotten to say. This brought a deep sense of peace.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, draw us ever closer to Jesus Christ so that we may be closer to those we have known and loved who are now with him in heaven.

Day 13

The Holy Spirit and Forgiveness

“Sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14

Before coming to Christ, the famous hymnist Charlotte Elliott had been reluctant to give herself to the Lord because she thought her life too sin-laden to be deserving of his grace. Fortunately, an evangelist of the time was able to convince her that Christ was willing to accept her “just as she was.” Through repentance and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she went on to write some of the great hymns of her day. Her “Just as I Am, without One Plea” is still popular in our day.

The free gift of God’s mercy and forgiveness must not be misunderstood as if it were indifference or laxity about our sinfulness. Jesus Christ had to make reparation for our sins on the Cross.

Forgiveness would be mere sentimentalism if it were not accompanied by a new life in Christ. He died for us that he might be in us. By the Holy Spirit forgiveness takes on a whole new dimension. To live in Christ through the Holy Spirit means the overcoming of our sinful nature. It is not simply a matter viewing Jesus as a good example of how we are to live. Jesus as our “example” is a noble idea, but ideas do not make us godly. Only God makes us godly.

Divine forgiveness is not a means of improving upon our old lives but the beginning of new lives. The saints were not saintly because they gradually became better and better, but because, when they fell short of God's best for them, they did not delay to repent—to be once more in the Spirit and the presence of their beloved Christ.

When you understand that the purpose of repentance is to be restored to the presence and redeeming power of Jesus Christ, you are on the road to a victorious life. If you think that it pleases God for you to grovel before him for a long time to show how miserable you are about the sins you have confessed, you are mistaken. The words of Christ are "Rise up, your sins are forgiven." This is the Christian way, to be risen with Christ and to be on your way with him.

Prayer: *Lord, forgive me and then set my feet on the holy way.*

Day 14

Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30

When faced with the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral, which had been bombed to ruins in World War II, Bishop Cuthbert Bardsley realized that it could always stand as a symbol of animosity toward those who had destroyed it. That would certainly have grieved the Holy Spirit. Instead, a spirit of forgiveness and new life was needed. Bardsley saw the rebuilding of the cathedral as a vehicle toward reconciliation. While the physical process of rebuilding was going on, the bishop sought to rebuild the faith of his people by teaching them to pray. He prepared a consecrated people for the consecration of the cathedral.

Ephesians 4:17-32 deals with living as children of light. We who are sealed with the mark of God give grief to the Holy Spirit when we “live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds” (v.17).

- 1) The unbeliever exists as if the world is the expression of blind force. The Spirit-filled person sees the world as the expression of a living, loving God.
- 2) The unbeliever is alienated from the life of God by darkness of his understanding. The Spirit-filled person believes that God cares for everyone and longs for us to know him.

- 3) The unbeliever lives in a lonely and abandoned world. The Spirit-filled person believes that God so loved the world that he was moved to redeem it by the sacrifice of himself.
- 4) The unbeliever gives himself up to the degradation of sin (v.19). The Spirit-filled person believes in God's forgiveness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which he has the power to live a Christ-like life.

When we behave like the unbeliever we grieve the Holy Spirit. The remedy is to study Christ (vv.20-21), to be renewed in the spirit of one's mind (v.23), be clothed in Christ (v.24). Life is not a set of rules; it is holiness.

Have you now grown in the Spirit to the extent that you can sense when you have grieved him? Certainly when you sin, you are aware of grieving him. But think also of the times when you have sensed that God wanted you to do something and you refused. Perhaps you have been careless in your thoughts or words and someone has been hurt. These are just simple examples of grieving the Holy Spirit. You should want to become so sensitive to the Holy Spirit that you would not grieve him. But, as we learned in our last lesson, when we have done so, we can ask for and receive forgiveness.

Prayer: Lord, make me so sensitive to the Holy Spirit that I will honor and not grieve him.

Day 15

The House of the Spirit

“Like living stones, be yourselves built into a spiritual house.” 1 Peter 2:5

As members of the Church we are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and so we are built into the House of the Spirit (1 Peter 2:4-10). We are built into the structure of the Church as living stones. Every stone is vital to the structure. If only one stone is absent, the entire house is weakened.

From my earliest days stone houses have fascinated me. There were several examples in the lake area in Minnesota where I grew up. I always thought I would like to build a small house out of the piles of rocks that stood at the edge of every farmer’s fields. I never did, but I keep studying them. The stones are different sizes, colors, and shapes, but they all fit in.

Miraculously, we are built all together, individuals as God made us, into a holy of holies, into a spiritual house. The corner-stone, Jesus Christ, pervades the whole structure.

Then God performs another miracle. The stones come alive and begin to grow like plants. The Holy Spirit grinds up and transforms that which was hard and unyielding into that which is malleable, surrendered, and fertile for new growth—”To be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

The new building is a temple where we present ourselves as a holy offering.

We might have an old house upon which we might wish to improve by adding a porch. But the house would still be an old and deteriorating building. God wants to tear down the old house, so full of rot and termites, and build a new one, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Slight improvement is not enough—not for a place of beauty and holiness.

How about your “house of the Spirit,” your place of worship? Is its foundation Jesus Christ? Are your brothers and sisters in Christ a holy fellowship? How can you be a presence of the Holy Spirit in your spiritual house? Whatever God calls you to do he will enable you to do in his name.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be within myself the person you would have me be in my place of worship.

Day 16

The Pledge of the Spirit

“But we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Romans 8:23 RSV

Sometimes we grow inwardly as we face what looks like a sacrifice on our spiritual journey, but the sacrifice is but the necessary removal of an obstacle, leading us into more of the new life in Christ. As a child I suffered excruciating pain when the family drove to California on vacation. We were going over the Sierra Nevada Mountains and my ears were assaulted with a searing trauma. Back at sea level a doctor discovered that a wad of cotton which had been put in the ear for an earache a long time before had become a sharp stone in the depths of my Eustachian tube. The change of air pressure had pushed it against my eardrum, causing pain.

When the obstacle was removed, not only was the pain relieved but I could hear perfectly. I had been living with half my hearing and didn't know it. The pain in the mountains was worth it. I now had a new life. It is a metaphor for our spiritual journey.

The Church is not yet fully grown in the divine attributes, and neither are we individually. But the redemption is an accomplished fact in the sense that all the conditions for the final success are already there.

We haven't grown into our new suits, but the suits are tailor-made for us and will fit us perfectly in the end. Even now we can claim completion (even though we are incomplete) because we have received the "earnest," or pledge, of the Spirit.

You are on a spiritual journey, a journey to discover and appropriate the life of Christ within you. As we looked at earlier, Romans 8:26-27, for instance, talks about how the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray about a situation, and how our hearts are known. The point is, you have supernatural resources available to you to do God's will. Even when you don't know the right words to pray, that is no reason to avoid coming before the Lord in prayer. That should give you confidence to trust that God will do his best concerning the matters on your heart.

Prayer: Teach me, Lord, what I must give up that I may grow up in the Spirit.

Day 17

The Treasure of Great Value

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.”
Matthew 13:44

A man who exemplified the meaning of the treasure of great value was Horatio Spafford, a Chicago lawyer and businessman. In 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed much of what the Spaffords owned. Grieving the death of his only son, Spafford sent his wife and four daughters to England for the girls' education. The ship on which they sailed collided with another vessel in the Atlantic and sank. Only Spafford's wife survived. Despite these continuing personal disasters, Spafford's faith never seemed to waiver. He wrote a poem that became the hymn “It Is Well with My Soul.” “When sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, it is well, it is well with my soul.”

In Matthew 13:44 Jesus gives us the Parable of the Hidden Treasure. The *treasure of great value* is the Holy Spirit within us. The field in which we dig to find this treasure is in the central part of our souls. Nothing in the world is as valuable as this great discovery. We should be willing to part with everything we have to obtain it.

1) The Holy Spirit within us brings the power and presence of Christ. The *treasure of great value* is God's gift. We couldn't possibly earn the Holy Spirit. Even the stirrings of spirituality, which turn our hearts in the direction of God, are God's grace. We are to respond to those stirrings until we are Spirit-possessed. Everyone is possessed by something. To choose the treasure of

great value is to set us free from all other things that would possess us.

2) The *treasure of great value* is the wisdom and love of God within us. We don't have to run here and there to find "truth." Humanism has given the "search for truth" a noble sound. Thus people have claimed this concept or that concept, this ideology or that ideology, as the final answer. It ends up in mental conflict, many times in actual warfare. Yes, we are to use our minds but all thinking must rise up from the wellspring of God's own truth. The truth of the Gospel sets us free.

3) The *treasure of great value* is the temple of God within us. From where does the spirit of divine worship come? It is from the temple of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to worship God in Spirit and in truth. This worship is eternal. When we are grounded in this worship, we live unto God in daily life. Every day is like Sunday. Everything we do is a song of praise.

4) The *treasure of great value* is the peace and joy of God within us. The kingdom of self becomes the kingdom of Christ. We are no longer at war with God; therefore we are at peace. This is new birth in the Spirit; we move beyond mere happiness to unquenchable joy.

Are you willing to give up everything in order to have the treasure of great value, to be controlled by the Holy Spirit rather than by your own selfish desires?

Prayer: *Lord, Help me to be contented with nothing less than the treasure of great value.*

Day 18

The Witness of the Spirit

“It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Romans 8:16 RSV

One whose life gave witness to the Spirit was Teresa of Lisieux. She only lived to be 24 years of age. During her few years here on earth, her outward life was uneventful, but her interior life was intense. A French Carmelite nun, she had such a deep, personal life of prayer that her superior asked her to write her autobiography. Published in 1897, *The Story of a Soul* became an inspiration to many who sought an intimate relationship with the Lord through the Holy Spirit, and it remains popular today.

This is the witness of the Holy Spirit to our spirit:

1) To make himself known, who he is. Is the Holy Spirit some kind of weird and wooly experience of our own? This could be the occult, the superstitious, or the unbalanced personality. The Holy Spirit is God. This is the witness that the Holy Spirit bears to our spirit. If there are any manifestations to us they will be in accord with the revelation of the triune God. We are to test whether the Spirit is of God, and the bedrock upon which the test rests is Scripture.

2) To lead us into all truth; this witness follows from the first. He is the Spirit of truth. When we are in the Spirit, we cannot tell lies about God. We cannot

make him into our own image, attributing to him characteristics that we may think that we want him to have. We cannot make him one who is indulgent toward all our bad habits, one who prefers us over others, one who winks at our sins, or who magically gives us worldly success. No, he is the holy God whom we worship in spirit and in truth who makes us in his own image, not in ours.

3) To be our sanctifier, his witness is more than words. He comes to change hearts, to give us a new nature, to make us holy (whole people) by uniting us with Jesus Christ our Savior. We are then really “the children of God” because the blood of the lamb flows in us as this heart-transplant takes place. We become blood-relatives forever.

In the Spirit we cry, “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:15). We dare to be this intimate with God because we are filled with his Holy Spirit. If he deigns to come this close to us, we are allowed to come this close to him. It is sheer grace, of course.

Do you sense a deepening of your relationship with God as you have come to better understand the Holy Spirit and how he operates in your life? Dare to be intimate with God. Pray to him as Abba, Father. Abandon your heart to his great love for you.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for adopting me and making me an heir of your kingdom.

Day 19

All in All in Christ

“Christ is all, and is in all.” Colossians 3:11-17

Lottie Moon was one who did everything in the name of Christ. From an affluent Virginia family, she confounded her contemporaries who were fearful that her devotion to Jesus would take her to the mission fields. That is what happened, and she went to China in 1873. Standing only four feet three inches tall, she was an example of the old saying that “dynamite comes in small packages.” She taught and carried on evangelistic work, giving herself totally to Christ’s ministry until her health failed and she died in 1912. Finding her all in all in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit she gave her all to him.

“Christ is all, and in all.” When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, this saving union was accomplished. Before, this Christ was seen here and there; but from that time on he was not geographically or temporally limited. Christ was in all his faithful, everywhere, all the time.

Christmas is Christ with us (Emmanuel); Easter is Christ for us; Pentecost is Christ in us. Satan does not so much mind people believing that Jesus Christ is God and man, that he died and rose again and went up to heaven, if he can only make us disbelieve or forget that we are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit—that he is all in all.

What does all this have to do with your everyday life? Nothing, if you have bought into the world’s goals.

Everything, if you are Christ's forever. We have to confess daily that we are tempted by the gaudy glitter of temporal prizes. Penitence comes because, once we have known the glory of the Christ-life, how cheap and shallow everything else is in comparison.

Once again, having repented, we want all of him in all parts of us: a shining life, cleansed, sane, and directed. Thank God that he is always willing to take us back. He said, "Those whom the Father has put in my hands I will never let go" (John 6:37).

"Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). Through the Holy Spirit, when you say, "Lord Jesus," he is present. Inwardly, develop the spiritual habit of calling his name before you say or do anything of significance and it will transform your daily life. He will be all in all. That which can be done in the time of the intake of your breath will bring eternity into world time.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me that to pray in your name is more than words, that it invokes your presence.

Day 20

Prophets, Priests, and Kings

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” 1 Peter 2:9

One of the most “kingly” Christians of his time was born as a slave in 1861. George Washington Carver had to struggle to gain an education, but became one of this country’s foremost botanists. While a professor at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he prayed to God, “Mr. Creator, why did you make the peanut?” As a result of that prayer, the Holy Spirit inspired Carver to discover more than 300 marketable products from peanuts! This man with a servant’s heart was used by God to bless multitudes.

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be prophet, priest, and king, and the Holy Spirit has anointed us to be prophets, priests, and kings through the indwelling Christ—not with Christ’s perfection, but the more we surrender, the more we reflect him (1 Peter 1:10-13).

The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of prophecy. “Prophecy” means to “speak forth.” We are enabled to speak forth in his name. We can do this boldly, without timidity and embarrassment. The gift of prophecy also guides us into all truth. Today you hear of people calling themselves “prophetic” because they are expressing some new idea. The Holy Spirit keeps us from being such false prophets as this because the Spirit can only speak the truth of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit makes us priests (1 Peter 2:9-10). There are those who have holy orders, but there is also the priesthood of all believers. From the oldest time a priest was one who offered up sacrifices to God. Then Christ came as the great high priest and offered up the ultimate sacrifice that superseded the old sacrificial system—once and for all. Now we are priests in a new way. In thanksgiving, we offer up ourselves as spiritual sacrifices (Romans 12:1). We lay our lives on the altar of God and say, “Use me as you will.” Being an intercessor is a priestly role. A real intercessor says, “If I can in any way serve as part of the answer to my prayer for another, I offer myself.”

The Holy Spirit makes us kings. We shall reign with him forever and ever. The enthroned Christ is in our hearts. Thus we pray, “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” And we proclaim his kingdom when we display the qualities of Christ the King. What does Christ the King do? He comes among us humbly as one who serves.

You are kingly, “the greatest among you,” when you serve, not when you seek to be served. The paragraphs above ring forth with the word *service*. The kind of prophet, priest and king you are called to be is one who serves, as Jesus did. One of the major ways in which the Holy Spirit will be manifested in your life is in serving others.

Prayer: *Lord, help me to live boldly yet humbly in your name for your kingdom’s sake.*

Day 21

The Holy Spirit in the Trinity

“On that day you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” John 14:20

I was early taught that it is not for us to “understand” the Holy Trinity; it is for us to worship God as such. If the God you knew was not “beyond the measure of man’s mind,” you could be sure that you did not know the true God. Perhaps you were taught the same thing as a young person. Maybe someone used an illustration such as the fact that water can be in liquid form, frozen or as vapor...three things and yet the same.

The Holy Trinity is the revelation of God’s inner being. John 14:16-23 is one of the clearest passages of Scripture in which the persons of the Holy Trinity are mentioned and their inter-connectedness explained. The Trinity is not something made up by theologians to complicate our thoughts, but that which God made known to us. The apostles came to recognize God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not through books and lectures but in their deepening and enlarging experience of him.

They heard Christ often speaking of his relationship as the Son of the Father. He spoke also of the Holy Spirit who was to take his place when he was gone because the Holy Spirit would make the disciples know the reality of Christ’s promise, “I will be with you always.” And so Christ would not be absent from the apostles after the Ascension, but closer than ever.

He commanded the apostles to go into the world baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It became plain to the apostles that these divine three were not distinct individuals (three different gods), but that there was an inseparable unity among them. By heritage the apostles were intense monotheists, but the Trinity caused no difficulty to them. It was the manifestation of the one God.

Thus the coming of the Holy Spirit was not merely to compensate for the absence of the Son, but to complete his presence. In the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Son too was to come; in the coming of the Son, also the Father. Jesus said, "I will come to you." He also said, "I and the Father are one." The fourth Gospel tells us, "the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

As you have grown in your understanding of the Holy Spirit, has that helped you understand the Trinity? Yes, there is mystery involved. Yes, it is hard to explain the Trinity to a non-Christian. But, you already knew about God as Father and Jesus as Son, so, as the Holy Spirit has become an increasing reality in your life, undoubtedly the Trinity has as well.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for revealing yourself to me in such a majestic way.

Day 22

The Spirit of Prayer, the Spirit of Christ

“For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ....” Philippians 1:19

Frank Laubach was one of the Christian heroes of the 20th century. As a missionary to a fierce mountain tribe in the Philippines, he found himself completely isolated. He had no one to talk with because he did not yet know the language of the people. He could talk only with God. At first he decided that he could have conversation with God every hour. As time went on, he realized he could talk to God every minute. Then he knew that prayer was the very breath of his daily life in the midst of the most common tasks: while dressing, preparing food, studying, and making contacts with the tribesmen.

How do we continue in the Holy Spirit? It is by the Spirit of prayer. The Spirit of prayer is the Spirit of Jesus Christ and it forms the spirit of our lives. All so-called religion is a dead work unless it is the work of the Holy Spirit. When we pray for the Holy Spirit, he will enter into our prayer. That is why we say that the Spirit of prayer is the Holy Spirit himself (not merely a spiritual attitude of our own).

When we pray in and with the Holy Spirit, we are bringing the action of Jesus Christ into our lives, and at the same time we are driving out of our souls all that is not of Christ. This does not make us machines. We still have to

take the time to pray; we still have to set into motion the things that the Holy Spirit wants us to do.

Every Christian life is to be a continual state of prayer. We don't ever want to be free of God's influence. Then we would no longer be free. Either we pray without ceasing or we worship some other end. To be a person of prayer is living in the Spirit and having our conversation in heaven.

After learning about communion with God, Frank Laubach was still faced with the problem of how to convert the people to whom he ministered. God told him, once he had learned their language, he could teach one person to read the New Testament. That person, in turn, could teach one more person. Finally, by this means, the whole tribe was converted. Laubach used this one-teach-one method all over the illiterate world, becoming the Apostle to the Illiterate to hundreds of thousands of people. It came from the Spirit of Prayer

You will find increasing fulfillment in your life of prayer as you experience the Holy Spirit working with you in such a way that prayer becomes a life-force in you and not something that you occasionally do.

Prayer: Lord, every moment with you is a moment in heaven. Where else would I want to be?

Day 23

Christ and the Holy Spirit

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 1:3 RSV

I had a church that was blessed by having many prayer groups and Spirit-filled people. It totally affected the worship atmosphere. Outsiders would enter the church and immediately know in their hearts that something special was pervading that space; it was the Holy Spirit. As a preacher I was inspired by the prayers and presence of holy people and was enabled to touch seekers in an effective way. People were converted on the spot and joined the fellowship, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. God’s love had engulfed them.

As man, the word made flesh, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit. It was in the power of that Spirit that he taught, suffered, died, and was glorified. By the same Spirit the life of Christ is extended to those who believe in him. He is the head of a new humanity. In Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. Even as we walk in this world we have the divine benediction.

As the heavens closed around the ascending Christ, they opened up again around the descending Spirit at Pentecost in order to perpetuate Christ’s life and presence with us. Where the Church is, Christ is; where Christ is, the Church is.

To illustrate this, consider the conversion of the Apostle Paul, then Saul, on the road to Damascus. Jesus asked him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” By persecuting the Church, he had persecuted Christ. It is so easy to think of the Church as an institution, but we are to regard it as the community of heaven peopled by the new humanity of those who are in Christ. Even here and now we sit together “in heavenly places” in Christ. In him we have free access to the courts of heaven.

This is why every act of worship is such an awesome privilege. It is not just a religious program; it is the gateway of heaven. When you join with others as the Body of Christ you should expect great things to happen. Someone has said that to pray and worship without expectation is blasphemous. You should expect the cleansing of your sins. You should expect to see conversions. You should expect inspiration and renewal. You should expect heavenly visions. All of this is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), which is the guarantee of your spiritual inheritance.

In short, you should be experiencing blessings in your own life and in the Body of Christ of which you are a part.

Prayer: *Lord, bless me that I may be a blessing.*

Day 24

The Unity of the Spirit

“Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit.” Ephesians 4:3-4 RSV

The Christian Church would not have the unity it does today if it had not been for one of the early fathers of the faith, Athanasius. Bishop of Alexandria in 327, he stood solidly for orthodoxy in the face of the Arian heresy. Arians contended that Jesus was more than a man but less than God. It was a very popular belief that existed for generations and was espoused by some of the key leaders of the day. Athanasius’ fight against Arianism caused him to be placed in exile on five different occasions! He held his ground, however, and his position later became the universal teaching of the Church, to the benefit of all who have gone before us and ourselves as well.

What is the primary work of the Church? Some say it is evangelism. Others say it is Christian education. Still others say it is social outreach. Some will say that it is stewardship. The list could go on. All of these are important, but the primary work of the Church is to bring people into union with Christ.

Once people are in union with Christ—he in us and we in him through the Holy Spirit—the other things will happen. You can’t evangelize unless you know Christ. You can’t teach until you know the one about whom you are teaching. You can’t have social outreach until you are filled with the love and compassion of Jesus. Stewardship comes

out of boundless gratitude to a Lord who has given you everything, particularly his life.

And this union with Christ unites us to other people. This unity is the deepest and most ultimate that is conceivable; everyone becomes a blood relative. This unity makes us look outside of our self-centeredness, for now our center is Christ. As we come closer to him, we come closer to those who are much loved by him as we know ourselves to be.

The same is true of denominations. The division of the churches is a scandal to the meaning of unity of the Holy Spirit. Unity will not come by concordats and paper agreements, but by coming together in Christ who is the head of the body—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" (v.5).

Christian unity is deeper than sympathy, affection, or common ideals. It flows through the lifestream of the Holy Spirit, the blood of the Church, the real life of Christ in each of us. It is in you. The Holy Trinity has celebrated this unity from eternity.

Prayer: O Holy Spirit, bind us into one fellowship and communion through Jesus Christ.

Day 25

The Spirit and the Church

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 RSV

The Church is the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the life-giver, and the life he gives is the life of Jesus Christ. For this the Church exists: to be the Spirit-bearing body and that is to be the bearer of Christ. The Church, the Body of Christ, is the extension and the perpetuation of the Incarnation in the world. The Church exists to bring the life of Jesus to every age, to every person who will receive him.

What makes the Church alive and on the move? Some, with their lavish capital building programs, think it is the church facility. I knew of a congregation that received a huge sum of money to build a new church. The congregation was quite dead and uninspired, and the hope was that the new building would give them a new shot in the arm. When I met the minister of the church a year after the facility was built he said, “The congregation is as dead as ever.”

Others think that the secret of an effective church is a multiplicity of programs. The calendar is filled with activities. There are discussions, committees, commissions, surveys, reports, recommendations, and seminars. In the end many members are exhausted and burned out.

Still others are convinced that in order to have a church on the move they need to have professional

leadership, filled with personality, pushing them where they ought to go. They may find a dynamic pastor with a sparkling personality and see almost instant effects, but when he leaves for greener pastures, the congregation comes to a halt.

What makes a church alive and on the move? It is nothing other than the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit brings a congregation into its central mission—to bring people into union with Jesus Christ, the Lord of all life and being. Then all other things that a church ought to be doing will be his work, his way.

Here is the challenge you face as you live by the Holy Spirit: how can you help your congregation understand that it is the empowering of the Spirit, and nothing else, that will allow it to become the church God calls it to be? As the Holy Spirit pervades your life you become an example of what life in the Spirit can be. You become a light of Christ to shine in your church and in your world. Let that light shine!

Prayer: *Renew your Church, O Lord, beginning with me.*

Afterword

On the day of Pentecost the apostles “were filled with the Holy Spirit.” This was not a doctrinal matter, but the actual invasion of God the Holy Spirit into every nook and cranny of their lives. What happens today when people are filled with the Holy Spirit? The same thing that happened to the apostles. Just as with the apostles, Spirit-filled people become people with enthusiasm. That word “enthusiasm” (*en theos*) actually means “in God-ism”. You become excited about your new life in Christ and it can’t help but bubble over. You are effervescent with this heart-changing, gladsome infilling of holiness. You become irrepressible. No one can take away the “Spirit” from you.

Just as the apostles, you also have a unique kind of fellowship, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit who links your life in a new, wonderful way with other Spirit-filled people. These are people with whom you can sing spiritual songs, worship in unison, join in prayer, and join hands in the pilgrimage to the Holy City.

Just as the apostles, you have spiritual power. It is the fulfillment of the promise of Christ. Power of the Spirit comes when God is no longer marginal and vague, but focal and dynamic. You are now capable of doing things for the Lord that you never dreamed you were capable of doing. God grants you gifts for his service that you never had before. He opens doors for the conversion of people and the changing of situations from the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of our Lord. You discover that the power of the Holy Spirit is God’s unquenchable love. It is not at a distance but within us.

To live in the Spirit is to be truly alive. Ultimately, when we have shed this mortal body, we will experience spiritual living forever. God means for this life to be in place right now. It's as if he has thrown the mantle of the Spirit around our shoulders. It seems too big for us right now, but we are growing into it. Then we shall appear before the throne of God with that goodly company. "Who are these, clothed in white robes?" They are those who, by the Holy Spirit, have put on Christ.

Kairos is an ancient Greek word meaning the right or opportune moment. Now is the *kairos* moment for you. It is your time to put on Christ. You have had an opportunity through this little book to consider the many facets of life in the Holy Spirit. It is the life Christ has for you. Put on Christ and be counted with those who live boldly for him.